
Navigating the Human Condition in the 21st Century | Lesson 1 | Overview

3 Keys:



Expression is a foundational non-physical need that can help us get all of our other needs met.



When people don't have their physical needs met, their need for expression will increase.



People can turn anything into expression and can express anything.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students categorize expression as a basic human need.
- Students identify ways in which expression helps to fulfill physical needs, and the circumstances in which our non-physical need for expression can increase.
- Students identify different forms of expression, and different emotions and experiences that are channeled through expression.

Materials:

- 1 copy per student of Codex Fragment with Keys 1, 2, and 3
- Sticky notes or small scrap paper
- Optional: chart paper for small group activity, one page per group
- For pre-unit reflection, students will need a laptop or other device to access an online message board.
- *All lessons come with PowerPoint slides and require a way to share these with students. **Note:** the slides in this entire series of lessons often come with additional guidance in the notes section at the bottom of each slide, readable and editable in development mode and readable in presentation mode.*

Time:

- One 50-90 minute period depending on use of Pre-Unit Reflection and Supplemental Activities.
- *Supplemental activities are provided at the end of the lesson.*

For students:

“We are going to start a new exploration into what is called the ‘human condition.’ The human condition is ‘what it means to be human’. When we understand this, we can better understand literature, history, current events, technology, our nation and world, interactions that occur in our daily lives, and how to be confident, secure, and happy. To prepare for our discussions, here are two reflection questions. Take time to reflect on what you, personally, believe it means to be human. Write at least one paragraph about each of these questions:

1. What does it mean to be human?
2. How can your ability to answer that question help you in your life?

Choose one aspect of being human that you expressed in your paragraphs that you would like to share, and post on [*teacher’s preferred digital platform*].”

For teachers:

- Give students link to digital message board.
- This can be given as homework or as an independent task during a specified work time. Collect the responses and review before beginning the lessons to prepare for any discussions that might arise.

Distribute Codex Fragment.

1. **Show** Slide 1: Title slide
2. **Show** Slide 2: Codex Mendoza
 - a. “A **codex** is an early kind of book. The pages were handwritten. They were often illustrated, and they helped people think about and remember things.
 - b. “The **Codex Mendoza** shown here is an ancient manuscript that describes important events from Aztec history in pictographs and writing.”
3. **Show** Slide 3: Codex Fragments
 - a. “To explore the human condition, we will use handouts called **codex fragments**, since they have images to help you think and remember.”
4. **Show** Slide 4: Human Condition
 - a. “There is a term we use for ‘what it means to be human’. The term is **the human condition**. Understanding the human condition will help us better understand: our personal lives, our relationships, our society, our use of technology, our human problems, and potential solutions to our problems”
5. **Show** Slide 5: Definitions  (whenever a slide shows this open book icon that means students will be writing on their codex fragment.)
6. **Read** or have students read the following definitions.
Have students record definitions on codex fragment.
 - b. **Human Condition** (what it means to be human)
 - c. **Shared Humanity** (what we have in common that goes beyond race, gender, religion, nationality, and time period)
7. “These will be our working definitions as we explore the human condition and our shared humanity.”
8. **Show** Slide 6: Reflection Question
9. “To begin exploring the Human Condition and our Shared Humanity, let’s start with a question:”
 - d. “What do we all need as humans? What did people, regardless of what time period they lived in, or what continent they lived on, need? What do people all around the world today need? What will people need in the future?”
 - e. *Students works in pairs, small groups, or table groups. They record their responses on sticky notes or scrap paper, with one response per note.*
 - f. “This is an important question. If we don’t know what we need, how can we be **secure**? How can we be **confident**? How can we be **happy**? Take a couple of minutes to write down what you think our human needs are.

Write one human need per sticky note. Write as many as you can think of.” *Allow time for students to write responses. (3 mins is usually plenty)*

- g. “Now rank your answers by order of most to least important, if you think there is an order. You might think some needs are equally important.”
(2 minutes works here)
 - h. “Now divide your responses into physical and non-physical needs. You can take them out of rank order if needed. You might think some needs are both physical and non-physical, and you can make a section for those.” *(2 minutes works here)*
It is very helpful to keep these responses and have them on chart paper somewhere for students to refer back to throughout the unit. Keep them divided into physical and non-physical needs, but don’t worry about rank order.
10. “We are now going to talk about needs **that can help you get every need on your list met**. We can call these foundational needs. These foundational needs are non-physical and can help you meet every other need, including every physical need.”
11. **Question for students:**
- a. “What is the first need to activate after we are born?” *Allow for responses. This can also be a rhetorical question that transitions to the next slide.*
12. **Show** Slide 7: Newborn Baby *This slide has animation. Click to advance text and to reveal video.*
- a. “We are now going to talk about **foundational non-physical needs**.”
 - b. “**Foundational non-physical needs** can help you get every need on your list met.”
 - c. “**Expression** is the first foundational non-physical need we will talk about.”
 - d. “**Expression** activates as we take our first breaths, before we have our first meal.”
 - e. “**For newborn babies, expression takes the form of crying.**”
 - f. *Click to reveal video. Click again to play video.*
13. **Show** Slide 8: **Reflection question:**
- a. “Which physical needs does expression (crying) help babies meet?”
 - i. **Note to Teacher:** *Babies can cry because they are hungry, cold, hot, need their diaper changed, need to be burped, or due to some other form of discomfort. Babies can cry because they want nurturing (a non-physical need) – they want to be held, they are afraid, and for other reasons. When babies are born, the initial act of crying can encourage adults to take care of them.*

14. **Show** Slide 9: Puppies, Slide 10: Birds, and Slide 11: Baby Sloth
15. “The need for expression exists in other species as well. Many other animals cry as they take their first breaths before they have their first meal (newborn puppy video), to get their meals (baby bird video), or to get safety (sloth video).”
16. **Show** Slide 12: Expression is a Foundation
- This slide has animation. Click to advance the text.*
 -  **Key #1:** Expression is a foundational non-physical need that can help us get all of our other needs met.”
 - Have students record Key #1 (represented by the first horizontal key) on their codex fragment*
 - To reinforce relevance, remind students that the foundational non-physical needs can help them get every need on their list met, both the physical and non-physical needs on their list.*
 - “Adolescents and adults can use expression in **far more ways** than a newborn baby to meet these needs.
 - “We can learn to make our expression **much more powerful.**”
 - When showing the chart with Physical Needs at the top and Foundational Non-physical Needs below, mention that there are nine foundational non-physical needs that can help them get every need on their list met. Expression is just the first one. Regarding expression, you can have students go back to their needs list by asking them, “Are there any non-physical needs on your list that expression can help you meet?”*
 - Note to Teacher:** Mention to students that expression is not only a foundation beneath physical needs (as shown in the diagram), but also beneath other non-physical needs they might have written down in their list. If students wrote down community, friendships, love, etc. for non-physical needs, have them consider how expression can help them meet those needs. If students wrote down “sun” or “toilet” as a physical need, expression can help them meet this need (saying “I need to go outside,” “I need to go to the bathroom,” or “Where is the bathroom?”).
17. **Show** Slides 13-15: Heimlich Maneuver
- This video shows how air (a physical need) decreasing results in an increased need for expression (a foundational non-physical need). Expression is often thought of as something that is just about expressing one’s “feelings” or “identity,” but this video shows that expression is also about survival. Expression is about life and death, and expression can save lives.*

- b. *The man who is choking uses non-verbal expression to communicate, in the form of gestures and body language. This transitions to the next slide, where the baby uses non-verbal expression. Slides 14-15 introduce the concept of non-verbal expression, Slides 17-18 (Shakespearean Baby and Playful Puppy videos) further illustrate non-verbal expression, and Slide 19 (Reflection Activity) gives students a chance to think of other forms of both verbal and non-verbal expression.*
- c. *You can ask students if they know the universal distress signal for choking, which is a form of non-verbal expression.*

18. **Show** Slide 16: Need for Expression Going Up

- a.  **“Key #2:** When people don’t have their physical needs met, their need for expression will increase.”
- b. *Have students record Key #2 (represented by the vertical arrow on the right) on their codex fragment.*

19. **Show** Slide 17: Shakespearean Baby

- a. “When babies get a little older, their expression gets much more diverse and complex. Unlike a newborn baby, notice how this baby uses complex **non-verbal expression** (gestures, body language, eye contact), and can **express emotions that are not just about physical needs.**”
- b. *This slide has animation. Click to reveal video and comments about the video.*
- c. “It’s amazing to see how sophisticated expression can become even at such a young age.”

20. **Show** Slide 18: Playful Puppy

- a. “When puppies get a little older, their expression also gets much more diverse and complex. Unlike a newborn puppy, notice how this puppy uses complex **non-verbal expression** (gestures, body language, eye contact), and can **express emotions that are not just about physical needs.**”

21. **Show** Slide 19: **Reflection Activity**

- a. “Expression gets much more diverse and complex when people become adolescents and adults. This expression makes human societies possible.”
- b. *This slide has animation. Click to reveal images and advance text.*
- c. “Expression is a **foundation** beneath human societies”
 - i. *Have students write “Expression” on the bottom level of the foundation on their codex fragment, as seen in the image.*
- d. “To explore the range and complexity of human expression, let’s come up with a list of all the different ways human beings can express themselves.

Write this list on the expression foundation of your codex fragment. **Let's see how many we can come up with.**"

- e. "Now make a list of as many forms of expression you can think of that the **digital world** provides."
 - i. *Have students record responses on their codex fragment in the foundation area labeled expression.*
 - ii. **Alternate Activity:** *Depending on time, you might want to divide the class into groups and have them see which group can come up with the most forms of expression.*
 - 1. *Have the group with the most forms of expression read off their responses. The other teams should check off duplicate responses.*
 - 2. *Have other groups share any forms of expression not mentioned by the winning group.*

22. Show Slide 20: Breaking Video

- a. **Guiding Question:** "How many different forms of expression can you see and hear in this 3-minute video?"
- b. **Supplemental Questions:** "Notice: Which forms of expression seem spontaneous? What are people expressing?"
- c. *After watching the video, briefly discuss which forms of expression students noticed. If any of these forms weren't mentioned in the previous expression list on their codex fragments, they can add a few that stood out the most to that list.*
 - i. **Note to Teacher:** The dancer in the white shirt, B-Boy Junior, had polio as a child. He developed his dance techniques around the impact that polio had on his leg. "I have always tried to turn my disability into an advantage . . . I came up with my own mix of gymnastics and martial arts – moves I could do on my hands . . . **Breaking is the best way that I've found to express myself.**" (<https://www.redbull.com/us-en/artist/junior>)

23. Show Slide 21: GIFs from video

- a. **Reflection:** "Take a moment to look at the GIFs and notice all the different ways people are expressing themselves here."
 - i. **Note to Teacher:** In addition to the visual expressions in the GIFs, consider all of the different expressive sounds from the video (vocalizations, clapping, whistling, the music, etc.) and expression in the form of clothing, hairstyles, etc.

24. **Show** Slide 22:  **“First Half of Key #3:** People can turn anything into expression,”
- Have students record the first half of Key #3 (represented by the second horizontal key) on the codex fragment. The second half of Key #3 is on Slide 26.*
 - The following text can help transition to Slide 23: “Expression can be diverse, not only in terms of the countless forms of verbal and non-verbal expression, but also the emotions underlying expression. Expression can communicate every human feeling, from rage to joy.”*
25. **Show** Slide 23: Rage Lyrics “Do you know who wrote these song lyrics?”
- This slide has animation. Click to reveal the answer.*
 - “The Queen of the Night aria was written by Mozart over 200 years ago. This aria is part of *The Magic Flute*, one of the most frequently performed operas in the world to this day. The Queen of the Night aria expresses rage in the form of vengeance. The singer not only expresses rage, but also crazed and maniacal pleasure, almost like frenzied laughter, at the thought of taking revenge.”*
26. **Show** Slide 24: Video of Aria Performance
- Read the text for Listen, Notice, and Wonder. This slide has animation. Click to advance text.*
 - Play video and then allow two or three students to share what they noticed about the performance and any observations they had about the conductor’s use of expression.*
27. **Show** Slide 25: Ode to Joy
28. “This symphony was written by Beethoven almost 30 years later, using lyrics from a poem by Friedrich Schiller. These lyrics express joy and solidarity.”
- Note to Teacher:** *The video’s subtitles say “all men shall become brothers” but in the lesson we use the translation “all people.” The original poem uses the German word “Menschen,” which means human or person and is a gender-neutral word.*
29. **Show** Slide 26:  “People can turn anything into expression, and people can express anything.”
- Have students record the second half of Key #3 on their codex fragment.*
30. **Show** Slide 27: Using Expression to Ask for Help
- This slide has animation. Click to advance text and show the Marcus Aurelius quote.*
 - “Marcus Aurelius lived almost 2,000 years ago.”*
31. **Show** Slide 28: Key Map *This slide has animation. Click to show all six keys.*
- We’ve learned three keys in this lesson, and we need three more to unlock the first skill.*

Supplemental Slides:

- Slide 30: Background note for educators about research linking extremist recruiting with human needs
- Slide 31: Optional video of an infant's expression upon first breaths
 - *This video begins after a rare c-section “en caul birth,” where a baby is born with the amniotic sac intact. Use this video at your discretion based on the maturity of your class. There is no nudity shown and only a few specks of blood, but this video shows the surgical site, along with the baby being removed from the amniotic sac. We wanted to offer this video as an option, because it shows the immediacy of the activation of expression right after being born. Again, babies typically start crying as they take their first breaths of air.*
- Slides 32-33: Two video examples for Supplemental Research Activity

Supplemental Research Activity:

Research some interesting or surprising ways people have found to express themselves. Post your findings on a shared digital message board.

- What about each form of expression is unique to that medium? Make a caption for each of your findings.

Slides 32 and 33 include examples of this activity that you can share with students.

Note to Teacher: *These examples and other creative endeavors can also be about other foundational non-physical needs (that will be discussed in later lessons), such as challenge, purpose and meaning, self-worth, belonging, etc.*

Supplemental ELA Activity:

Read through the excerpt from *The Outsiders*, by S.E. Hilton.

- How does the author use non-verbal forms of expression like appearance (facial expressions, body language, hairstyle, personal belongings, etc.) to help us better understand their mood or personality?
 - Give examples of some of the characters' appearances or personal belongings and explain what they tell you about the characters. Why do these fit with the personality the author has given that character?
 - What is unique about fiction writing as a form of expression? What does narrative writing allow you to do that other forms of expression do not?